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PORTUGAL'S POLITICAL PACT

ANNCR: NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN TAKES A LOOK AT THE LATEST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN PORTUGAL.

VOICE: A COLLECTIVE SIGH OF RELIEF PROBABLY WENT UP IN MANY WEST EUROPEAN CHANCERIES AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT YESTERDAY WHEN LISBON ANNOUNCED THE SIGNING OF A NEW POLITICAL PACT. FOR IT MEANT THAT PORTUGAL, AFTER TWENTY-TWO MONTHS OF SEARCHING FOR A SOLUTION OF ITS POLITICAL PROBLEMS, HAS CHOSEN THE ROAD OF WESTERN-STYLE DEMOCRACY. JUST A FEW SHORT MONTHS AGO THE PICTURE WAS ENTIRELY DIFFERENT.

THE SITUATION THAT PICTURE REFLECTED KEPT THE LIGHTS BURNING LATE AT NATO HEADQUARTERS IN BRUSSELS AND THOSE OF PORTUGAL'S ALLIES. FOR IT LOOKED AS THOUGH LEFTIST MILITARY OFFICERS ALLIED TO PORTUGAL'S DISCIPLINED BUT MINORITY COMMUNISTS WOULD DOMINATE THE POLITICAL SCENE FOR AT LEAST TIME. FACED WITH THIS SITUATION, THE MODERATE PARTIES JOINED FORCES WITH MILITARY ELEMENTS OPPOSED TO SUCH A TAKE-OVER OF THE REVOLUTION THAT HAD ENDED FIFTY YEARS OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE. WHEN THESE MODERATE FORCES REALIZED THE THREAT PRESENTED BY RADICAL MILITARY MEMBERS OF THE RULING REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, THEY REACTED AND DEMONSTRATED CLEARLY THAT THEY HAD THE BACKING OF AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE. THUS, THE POLITICAL PACT EARLIER FORCED ON PORTUGAL'S CIVILIAN PARTIES WHEREBY THEY SURRENDERED ALL AUTHORITY TO THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AND THE MILITARY CAME UNDER INCREASINGLY HEAVY ATTACK FROM THE MODERATE PARTIES AND THEIR ALLIES IN THE ARMED FORCES.

FOLLOWING AN ABORTIVE LEFT-WING COUP ATTEMPT IN NOVEMBER, MODERATES IN THE ARMED FORCES JOINED WITH THE SOCIALISTS, THE POPULAR DEMOCRATS AND THE CENTER SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN EFFORTS FOR A NEW PACT. AFTER WEEKS OF NEGOTIATIONS THE NEW PACT PROVIDES FOR A RETURN BY THE MILITARY SOON TO THEIR BARRACKS, AND THE RE-ROUTING OF THE PORTUGUESE REVOLUTION AWAY FROM THE ROAD TO AUTHORITARIAN SOCIALISM TO THAT OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY. SIGNING IT, IN ADDITION TO PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES, WERE REPRESENTATIVES OF FIVE PORTUGUESE PARTIES, INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS.

BRIEFLY PUT, THE NEW AGREEMENT PROVIDES FOR MOST OF THE GOVERNING POWER TO BE EXERCISED BY A PRESIDENT AND A LEGISLATURE TO BE ELECTED BY DIRECT SUFFRAGE--WITH THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL LIMITED TO AN ADVISORY ROLE.

THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, IN WHICH ALL PARTIES WILL PARTICIPATE--INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS AND AN ALLIED SPLINTER GROUP--ARE SCHEDULED FOR APRIL TWENTY-FIFTH. THAT'S THE SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF WHAT THE PORTUGUESE CALL THEIR "REVOLUTION OF THE CARNATIONS" -- FOR THE FLOWERS THAT CIVILIANS DISTRIBUTED TO THE TROOPS THAT OVERTHREW THE FIFTY-YEAR-OLD AUTHORITARIAN SYSTEM. AND TWO MONTHS AFTER THE PARLIAMENTARY BALLOTTING, IN JUNE TO BE PRECISE, THE PORTUGUESE PEOPLE WILL CHOOSE A PRESIDENT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HALF A CENTURY.

FOR ALL THESE REASONS, PORTUGAL'S NATO ALLIES TODAY ARE WELCOMING WHAT APPEARS TO BE THE IMMINENT RETURN OF PORTUGAL TO THE RANKS OF FREELY-ELECTED DEMOCRACIES.

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